



Neighborhood Networks and Telehealth

Technology can bridge a critical health care divide for residents living in HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing developments. Seniors with chronic health conditions in these developments often have fragmented access to primary health care. At a Neighborhood Networks center in Portland, Oregon, residents in a diabetes support group are using the Internet to educate themselves regarding the best practices in caring for their conditions. A more advanced application of technology is in the planning phases at a Maryland Neighborhood Networks center. In partnership with a local university, the center is designing an on-site clinic with nurse practitioners. The on-site clinic will be connected by videoconference to the full specialty clinic at the university, giving seniors access to other specialties.

What is telehealth?

Telehealth is the use of technology, such as computers, Internet access, videoconference equipment and medical devices, to bring health information, education and health services to health care consumers. National attention is currently focused on using telehealth to better serve historically underserved low-income communities. Neighborhood Networks is on the forefront of meeting that challenge.

What is the Neighborhood Networks initiative?

Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that encourages the development of resource and computer learning centers in privately-owned HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing. These centers work to build self-reliant neighborhoods that meet the needs of lower-income families and seniors where they live.

Why is health care an important component of Neighborhood Networks centers?

Studies have shown that access to quality health care is one of the major barriers facing members of low-income communities attempting to become self-sufficient. The health care needs of this community are also great because of many residents' lack of access to quality health care services. By addressing health care needs, Neighborhood Networks centers can help adults to obtain and keep

jobs, children to succeed in school, and seniors to enjoy a decent quality of life.

How do Neighborhood Networks centers address health needs?

Neighborhood Networks centers are integrating health care into their other services in a variety of ways. Some centers have an on-site nurse who acts as a case manager to ensure that residents obtain appropriate quality care, including preventive care. Other centers partner with local health care service providers to recruit visiting doctors, nurses and health educators to provide information and services to residents on-site. Also, Neighborhood Networks centers are assisting

Neighborhood Networks Facts...

WHAT: Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative launched by HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing in September 1995 that encourages the development of resource and computer learning centers in HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing.

- More than 620 centers in operation*
- Thousands of business, community and government partners
- More than 744 properties with centers in planning*

WHO: Serves HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing residents, owners, managers, partners and communities.

*as of 08/00

states in their outreach efforts for the new Children's Health Insurance Program, which will provide health insurance to children of low-income families that do not qualify for Medicaid.

How can Neighborhood Networks centers use telehealth to expand access to health information and services?

Neighborhood Networks centers can offer space in a housing development, computers with Internet access, and on-site staff to coordinate telehealth activities. Increasingly, centers are developing relationships with local, regional and federal partners to bring health information and services to residents. Some centers are downloading health information from the Internet for disease-specific support groups. Others are planning to bring a variety of health services to their properties by holding on-site clinics and augmenting them with video-conferencing capabilities. Centers also connect residents via the Internet to others with similar ailments so they can share information and resources.

What types of health care partners are working with Neighborhood Networks centers?

Local health departments, area agencies on aging, hospitals, health care networks, health maintenance organizations, state agencies, local nonprofits, faith-

based organizations, community clinics and others are building relationships with Neighborhood Networks centers to promote health.

How can I get involved?

Neighborhood Networks is forming partnerships to further the goal of developing telehealth and other health care models in Neighborhood Networks centers nationwide. For more information about partnering with Neighborhood Networks, contact the **Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at (888) 312-2743** or the Neighborhood Networks coordinator at your local HUD office.

For more information, contact:

✉ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
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Fairfax, VA 22031-1207

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